United Nations S/PV.5577 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5577th meeting

Monday, 4 December 2006, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Al-Nasser	(Qatar)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Ainchil
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Vandeville
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Ms. Filippidou
	Japan	Mr. Takase
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Johansen
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Ohlson

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-64061 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 3.25 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): As I indicated at the morning session, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver condensed versions of their speeches when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Ainchil (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. At the same time, we thank the Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Egeland, for his briefing to the Council. We also especially wish to express our appreciation Mr. Egeland's excellent work leading the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in challenging times for the humanitarian community. His commitment and devotion have made a difference in the life of populations affected by humanitarian emergencies, vulnerable groups and displaced populations.

The situation described by the Emergency Relief Coordinator clearly shows the persistence of atrocities committed against civilians on a scale that goes beyond the statistical fact of the increase or the decrease of certain categories of violence or attacks.

My delegation strongly condemns these attacks and would like to reiterate that no national security consideration can prevail over the primary obligation of all States and parties to a conflict to fulfil the rules of international humanitarian law as contained in the Hague Conventions and the Geneva Conventions and their additional Protocols.

The Security Council has substantially contributed to the international regime of protection of civilians through its resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1674 (2006). At the same time, the Council has been given a clear mandate by the General Assembly to take collective action in a timely and decisive fashion to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The previously mentioned legal framework places at the disposal of the Security Council a set of tools for the protection of civilians. It is the task of the Council to make full use of them.

In this respect, we would like to underline the importance of ensuring that the mandates of peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions include provisions regarding the protection of civilians, in particular, groups requiring special attention, women and children. These provisions should also address matters related to ensuring full and unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to civilians affected by armed conflict.

At the same time, the Council has expressed its disposition to examine situations of systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, to adopt adequate measures to contribute to the establishment of a secure environment, and to consider establishing zones and corridors to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance.

In addition to these important mandates, there are areas in the work of the Council in this matter where further improvement could be achieved. One example would be the improvement of the reporting mechanism on protection of civilians, in order to allow an appropriate follow-up in each of the situations included on the agenda of the Council.

The improvement of reporting mechanisms is also important in the initial moments of a crisis when civilians are affected and where an early warning might allow the Council to deploy preventive measures to protect civilians.

We also consider that there is room to advance in the normative work of the Security Council on the protection of civilians, in particular in areas where current crises show that there is a clear need for further development.

The situations of internal displacement are one of these areas. We commend the work and the leadership of OCHA in providing assistance and protection to internally displaced persons. At the same time, broader mandates are needed if there is political will in the international community to address the issue in its complexity. Other fields where further normative work can be explored include the linkages between small

arms and the protection of civilians, the disproportionate use of force and the use of war.

Finally, we understand that the situation of journalists in conflict also deserves the attention of the Council and we welcome the initiative of France and of other European countries in this respect.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Mr. President, let me begin by thanking your delegation for convening this meeting on protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Egeland, for his consistent and unyielding determination to assist the millions of innocent people who have been caught up in the negative consequences of armed conflict. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Furthermore, I would like to fully associate my delegation with the statement to be delivered later in the debate by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

As the statement by Mr. Egeland clearly illustrates, the efforts of the Security Council to maintain peace and security continues to come up short in the global perspective. It follows that the need to protect civilians affected by armed conflict is an ongoing imperative for the Council with no immediate end in sight. For that reason, we cannot continue to approach the question on an almost ad hoc basis. Populations in need must be able to depend on our will to come to their assistance, and perpetrators must be assured that their crimes will not go unpunished. Efforts by the Council and the international community as a whole to protect civilians in situations of conflict must be more predictable, timely and systematic.

A comprehensive framework for the protection of civilians already exists, particularly in the large body of international humanitarian law and in the three main Security Council resolutions on the issue. The immediate attention of the Council should therefore be devoted to implementing the protection framework in order to produce real improvements on the ground.

Emphasis should be placed on providing more comprehensive peacekeeping by, inter alia, incorporating the protection of civilians into the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations as a central element. Such mandates must be supported with the necessary capacity and practical support, enabling the peacekeeping forces to properly address protection needs on the ground, including by taking firm action against sexual violence and by providing protection to internally displaced persons.

The protection of civilians is a multifaceted challenge, and so must our response be. We must put to their best use the relatively limited number of tools available to the Security Council. That includes increasing our capacity to monitor and report on violations against civilians — an effort that is being successfully spearheaded on the issue of children affected by armed conflict. But it also includes referring violators to international courts, including the International Criminal Court, and using targeted sanctions to deter attacks against civilians, including humanitarian workers, workers for non-governmental organizations and journalists. The Council must overcome its reluctance to fully use those tools if it seriously wishes to move the protection agenda forward.

Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, in some cases, States manifestly fail to provide the necessary protection — or the perpetrator is the State itself. In situations in which a State embarks on waging war against its own population, the responsibility to protect the civilians affected becomes that of the international community. We have a moral and political obligation not to turn our backs on the many civilians who suffer from attacks carried out by, or with the consent of, their own Governments.

Whether or not the concept of the responsibility to protect needs further consideration is, as such, irrelevant. Given the lack of action and engagement elsewhere, the basic political commitment not to allow another Rwanda or Srebrenica is the responsibility of all of us, including the Security Council, as well as of other United Nations bodies.

In that regard, Denmark welcomes the decision by the Human Rights Council to convene a special session on the human rights situation in Darfur. It is high time that all actors engage in a comprehensive and constructive dialogue on that unacceptable situation. That in turn must lead to prompt and decisive action to alleviate the suffering of the people of Darfur.

The reporting and dissemination of news from areas entangled in conflict is often the only hope that

the affected populations have of influencing national, regional and international actors to step in and address the situation. Consequently, Denmark is deeply concerned by the alarming increase in attacks against journalists in recent armed conflicts. The continued targeting of journalists, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, is unacceptable and has now reached a level where the Security Council must express its clear condemnation of the situation. We hope that the initiative on this important issue, presented by France and Greece and supported by the United Kingdom, Slovakia and Denmark, will find general support in the Security Council.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his presentation.

According to the information that Mr. Egeland provided, much work remains to be done if the United Nations is to be effective in protecting civilians in armed conflict. In view of the situations that he described, we must reaffirm the responsibility of the United Nations to protect human rights throughout the world and the duty to prevent war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing. We must also reaffirm the importance of the task of ensuring humanitarian access to civilian populations affected by conflict and protecting the staff who provide such assistance, as well as all civilians involved. In that connection, Peru believes that the Security Council should continue to sponsor effective and feasible actions to ensure the protection of civilians who find themselves immersed in armed conflict.

I should like to make a few comments about the work of the Security Council in this area.

First, we seek full implementation of resolution 1674 (2006), which the Council adopted in April. We should continue to include clear guidelines and rules aimed at protecting civilians in all resolutions on countries in which there are peacekeeping operations and monitor their implementation. The Secretary-General must regularly inform the Council about the incorporation of the provisions of resolution 1674 (2006) into new or renewed mission mandates and continue to monitor specific cases in which conflicts and/or humanitarian crises have caused the civilian population to fall victim to violence, insecurity and systematic human rights violations.

Within the framework of the United Nations system, we must seek greater cooperation among the specialized agencies present on the ground so as to improve our efficiency in the protection of civilians, including displaced populations. Such efforts will help to provide more effective follow-up to Security Council decisions.

Likewise, the Council must cooperate with the International Criminal Court in the fight against impunity. Effectively penalizing of those responsible for grave human rights violations is an obligation of the international community and a powerful signal of the validity of the rule of law.

We express our grave concern at the persistence of situations of risk for civilian populations that Mr. Egeland cited this morning, including the situations in Darfur, Gaza, Chad, northern Uganda, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo. We took note of the five priorities that he set out for future work by the Security Council on the issue of protecting civilians. They clearly reflect the areas requiring greater attention, such as preventive measures, timely information on humanitarian crises and cooperative efforts with civil society, including non-governmental organizations.

Finally, I wish to express Peru's gratitude to Mr. Jan Egeland for his commitment to the defence and protection of civilian populations in the immense humanitarian crises that the world has witnessed.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to express to you, Sir, our pleasure to see you presiding over the Security Council during the month of December. Qatar is a country whose awareness of issues concerning peace and security as they relate to civilian populations needs no further proof. Your country has expressed its commitment in that regard on numerous occasions, particularly with respect to the upheavals that have recently characterized the Middle East crisis.

I would also like to commend the Ambassador of Peru and his team for the very professional job that they did in presiding over the Council last month.

We would like to thank you, Sir, for beginning your term at the head of the Council by taking the initiative to hold this debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict — an issue whose importance is clearly reflected in the number and the

gravity of situations in the world today that, increasingly, highlight the vulnerability of civilians.

Mr. Jan Egeland briefed us with the expertise and depth for which he is known, and our Organization has every interest in making use of that information.

The most recent statistics put at 27 million the number of people affected by war or similar disasters in 29 countries throughout the world. These people are described as refugees or displaced persons, and their numbers clearly demonstrate the scope of this growing phenomenon. No continent has been spared. Asia, southern Europe, the Middle East and Africa have all been affected, and it is women and children who are the most vulnerable.

Armed conflicts are man-made catastrophes, unlike so-called natural disasters — although the latter can often be directly or indirectly attributed to human responsibility. They have physical, moral and legal consequences that affect the integrity, freedom and basic rights of individuals.

With respect to conflict situations — which we are dealing with here — the protection of civilians has been made one of the core principles of international humanitarian law. Accordingly, civilians who are not taking part in hostilities should not under any circumstance be attacked. Rather, they must be spared and protected. That is set forth in specific international instruments, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, as well as Security Council resolution 1674 (2006). We must, more than ever, ensure that concrete measures are in place for follow up and compliance with those instruments.

The Secretary-General launched a consolidated appeal for 2007 to provide $3.9 billion in humanitarian assistance to protect the thousands of persons in need. We thank him for that.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts made by a number of countries, in particular Sweden, which is the only country to have devoted 0.05 per cent of its gross domestic product to humanitarian assistance. We call upon other countries not to weaken their commitments at a time of increasing need for civilians affected by armed conflict or natural disasters.

Another important aspect is the urgent need to provide assistance to non-belligerent parties. I am referring to the work done, often at great sacrifice and with great courage, by intergovernmental organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of High Commissioner for Refugees and, increasingly, non-governmental organizations. We must protect the men and women who work for those organizations, who, often at great danger to their own lives, provide assistance and hope to those who are in need. We would like to pay them a well-deserved tribute. We must increase awareness of the need to provide optimal security conditions for humanitarian workers so that they can carry out their noble mission.

The obligation to protect civilians rests above all with Governments. Governments must therefore do everything in their power to provide the most effective protection to all those for whom they are responsible, as the legitimate power invested with the necessary latitude to provide for their citizens — as well as for their partners — the highest possible level of security.

In this Chamber on 28 November, we discussed the plight of children caught up in armed conflict. By expanding the scope of the application of international conventions to all innocent civilians, we are seeking to highlight the importance of extending the rule of law.

At a time when so-called conventional wars against what used to be called enemy armies or enemy nations are often outnumbered by so-called civil conflicts, there is a dangerous blurring of the line between outright crime and what is euphemistically called collateral damage. We can see that in Darfur, with the sad and bloody escalation of conflict orchestrated by armed groups with questionable motives and a Sudanese Government whose powerlessness verges on indifference and whose nervousness borders on abdication of responsibility in the face of atrocities that are becoming increasingly intolerable.

In Africa, the conflict in Darfur is well on the way to becoming the prototype of a situation characterized by the denial of justice and by cynicism that goes against the most basic values of human dignity. It is true that a new chapter has begun — or is about to begin — in Sierra Leone and Liberia, then in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where terrible atrocities had been reported, as well as with regard to the disastrous toll wrought by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda.

The Security Council has on a number of occasions deplored the fate of populations in the Middle East, who are victims of military blunders or of acts of terrorism, such as those directed at bewildered civilians in Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Iraq. Likewise, in the former Yugoslavia, the international community in recent years strongly deplored the heinous crimes.

In such cases, as in others, the international community is confronted by two different obligations that, however, are not incompatible: the obligation to prevent, and the obligation to act. My delegation, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on conflict prevention, is currently working to determine the various factors that might enable the Council to work out a practical approach to help to prevent conflicts whose main victims are civilians.

In conclusion, I would like to say that today's discussion gives us an opportunity on the one hand to reaffirm our shared commitment to the provisions of international humanitarian law aimed at protecting civilians in armed conflict — they must be protected in all circumstances — and, on the other, to consider what actions can be taken at a number of levels, as well as their impact on the people involved.

In other words, we must prevent man-made disasters from amplifying the effects of natural disasters in a world already left so poorly protected by human ambitions. But that is for another debate. For the time being, we express our support for the draft presidential statement, to which we will give favourable consideration.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Congo for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I wish to congratulate you once again, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December. We extend once again our appreciation to the delegation of Peru for a task well accomplished during the month of November.

Mr. President, we thank you for having organized this important debate and wish the State of Qatar every success during its presidency of the Security Council for the month of December 2006. Let me also thank Mr. Jan Egeland, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his insightful briefing.

Enhancing the protection of civilians in armed conflict is a fundamental responsibility of States and of the international community; we cannot afford to fail in that respect. It is estimated that, of the hundreds of thousands of people who lose their lives due to the direct effects of war and low-intensity insurgency and to war-related famine and disease each year, almost 90 per cent are innocent non-combatants. Other violent acts include reprisals, forced recruitment, kidnapping, rape, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. The protection of civilians ought to include protection for humanitarian workers involved with refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Such insecurity is due to the presence or activities of armed groups and militias within and around camps and settlements. Governments need to be reminded of their obligation to provide protection.

As correctly pointed out by Mr. Egeland, the internal displacement of civilian populations in areas of conflict is on the increase, both in terms of numbers and of the complexity of protection needs. It is good news that the number of refugees is steadily declining, but the problem of internally displaced persons requires that renewed efforts be made to address it. The High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence has recognized the need for a more coordinated response operationally in providing resources and protection to IDPs.

Children, especially, have become the most affected victims of armed conflict. In some conflicts, the ratio of child soldiers is said to be as high as 60 per cent. There is no doubt that the realities on the ground are far crueler than statistics would indicate. We therefore join in emphasizing the need to enhance the efforts of the United Nations to protect civilians in armed conflict, including children.

Admittedly, the most important strategic objective has been to prevent armed conflict and its recurrence in the first place. That objective goes hand in hand with the initiative to urgently make the United Nations a more effective instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security. While the ongoing protection process has always played a vital role and will continue to do so, any progress made in the protection of civilians will constitute an integral contribution to the maintenance of global peace and security.

It is for that reason that we reaffirm our commitment in support of this highly cherished humanitarian cause. We also condemn each and every party involved in all situations of conflict in which innocent civilian populations are deliberately targeted and attacked as a strategy of war, for military advantage. Such unacceptable behaviour is contrary to the civilized conduct of modern warfare. It is our conviction that all such perpetrators must be held responsible for violating international law and that such cases should be prosecuted in order to put an end to the culture of impunity.

It is our view that today's fruitful discussions should go beyond a naming and shaming exercise. The Security Council has been greatly concerned at, and remains seized of, the level of human tragedy experienced by civilian populations, for example in the context of recent events in the Middle East and in Darfur.

The greatest challenge to the Council and to the international community as a whole occurs when Governments not only fail to protect their citizens but are themselves the cause of insecurity to their citizens. How can we exercise our collective responsibility to protect under such circumstances? We should hold such Governments responsible and accountable for their actions.

Equally challenging is the identification of existing gaps in the normative standards of international law and in their implementation by humanitarian actors, and the need to assist States that lack adequate capacity to protect various categories of affected civilians.

Experience in the Great Lakes has shown that a regional approach to addressing security and development problems has proved to be useful and much more effective. We appreciate the support of the Council and of the entire international community for the peace processes in Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have brought an end to the protracted wars there and paved the way to national reconciliation, the institutionalization of the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Indeed, the emerging peace, and the anticipated peace and security compact to be signed later this month in Nairobi by the countries of the region, will bring great relief to the region and enhance regional security and the safety of civilians.

Tanzania is very grateful that such positive developments have come about through the assistance rendered by the Council in the promotion of peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

We agree with those delegations that raised the issue of addressing the proliferation and illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons, which fuel conflicts and increase civilian casualties. This issue requires more concerted action by the various organs of the United Nations system as a way of enhancing the protection of civilians.

I cannot conclude my statement without noting my delegation's great concern at the emerging trend whereby some State and non-State actors are openly compromising the neutrality and questioning the impartiality of the United Nations to deploy peacekeeping troops or observers in areas they control. We should assure Member States that the United Nations is by definition an indispensable partner of its Member States in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The core duty of the United Nations is not only to maintain peace and security among Member States, but also to protect their respective civilians. Human security and safety should be as important as the security of States. The two must be addressed concurrently.

Finally, we would like to restate our appreciation to Mr. Egeland for his role in raising the profile of humanitarian issues on the international agenda in general and on the agenda of the Council in particular. He leaves behind a legacy of courage and dedication and, above all, of commitment to protecting and assisting civilians in precarious and vulnerable situations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Shcherbak (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we would like to welcome you, Sir, and the delegation of Qatar, who will be presiding over the Security Council in December - the last month of the year. We would like also to thank the delegation of Peru, which held the Council's presidency in November, for having effectively discharged its duties.

Our delegation would like to express its gratitude to Mr. Egeland for his update on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We are grateful to Mr.

Egeland for the efforts he has made in his post and wish him every success in his future activities.

Unfortunately, not a day goes by without our learning of more murders, abuses and other types of violence against civilians in armed conflict. Despite the existence of a myriad of instruments in the area of humanitarian and human rights law, in many of today's conflicts civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure are not simply the costs of waging war, but the result of premeditated actions. Like direct violence, the destruction of medical and social protection infrastructure during hostilities also causes loss of life from disease and starvation. This past year has been no exception in that regard, and was marked by further conflict that caused human suffering. This once again underscores the importance of a prompt response by the United Nations to cases of violence against innocent civilians and to the destruction of civilian infrastructure during armed conflict. This subject has taken on increasing importance in the humanitarian agenda of the United Nations. It calls for systemic measures at the international, regional and national levels. The key points in this connection are streamlined coordination and a clear division of labour, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Against that backdrop, we call for the greatest prudence when dealing with documents and concepts worked out without coordination with all United Nations Member States or without any general discussion in the United Nations. We urge that they not be promoted as being widely recognized under international standards.

In that context, it is to be expected that the concept of the responsibility to protect has not yet become a reality today specifically because in its present form it does not enjoy sufficiently broad support from Member States. In our view, it would be wiser to talk about the implementation of the more acceptable option enshrined in the 2005 Summit Outcome, namely, the responsibility to protect civilians from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We would once again like to emphasize that, under this concept, the primary responsibility lies with national Governments, whose efforts must be supported by the international community without undermining State sovereignty.

We expect the Peacebuilding Commission to take specific steps to assist in the stabilization of post-conflict situations.

In the context of conflict settlement, we note the growing importance being given by the Security Council to problems affecting civilians as part of its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. Resolution 1674 (2006) was a further step in the Council's efforts in that regard. We are certain that, at this point, it is important to focus on the implementation of existing Council decisions to protect civilians, including those that highlight the subject of women and children, and not to dissipate our efforts by generating new documents in this area. The main goal should be to ensure the practical implementation of existing legal norms and the decisions already taken.

Our delegation attaches great importance to eliminating impunity and to the prosecution of all persons guilty of crimes against civilians. In that regard, we would note the role of the International Criminal Court.

When it comes to protecting civilians, it is necessary to ensure the security of humanitarian personnel themselves, whose effective work is crucial to providing assistance to civilians. At the same time, we would like to underscore the importance of having humanitarian workers comply with the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality.

In conclusion, we would be remiss if we were to fail to refer to the importance of preventing armed conflict, which calls for eradicating the root causes of conflict. In that connection, we fully agree with our Chinese colleagues. As a first step, it is important to at least avoid creating situations that are fraught with violence against civilians. Such a goal can be achieved only through the joint efforts of the entire international community. The United Nations is meant to play a leading role in that regard.

The President *(spoke* in Arabic): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to the presidency.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Qatar.

At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his briefing this morning.

In accordance with the Charter, the prevention of armed conflict is without a doubt one of the first priorities of the international Organization. However, the most tragic losses in armed conflict are those inflicted upon civilians. Such losses are among the most heinous consequences of armed conflict. For that reason, it is essential that United Nations bodies for the protection of civilians in armed conflict devote sufficient attention, time and efforts to that task.

Despite efforts to protect civilians, there has unfortunately been an increase in the number of armed conflicts throughout the world in recent years. There has also been a noticeable change in the nature of such conflicts. Urban and residential areas have increasingly been transformed into battlefields in cases of internal conflict and civil strife. That has contributed to the surge in the number of victims among civilian populations.

Although armed conflict takes a higher toll among women and children in comparison to other groups, the international community has only recently begun to realize that fact. We must, therefore, focus greater attention on the suffering of women and children caught up in armed conflict. We also take note of the ongoing recruitment of children and adolescents' which makes them victims of armed conflict.

Moreover, many of the armed conflicts raging today involve non-State actors. Many such actors fail to uphold international humanitarian law and fail to commit themselves to respecting human rights. That problem must be addressed differently from the way such violations committed by States and Governments are addressed.

In the context of the efforts made to put an end to armed conflict, it is crucial to obtain correct information about unfolding developments. That important task falls to journalists, who face serious challenges in delivering information to the public. The international community, and especially the parties to a conflict, must therefore commit themselves to protecting journalists, for they too are civilians.

It is abhorrent that civilians find themselves in harm's way during armed conflict. But even more abhorrent is the deliberate violent targeting of civilians. This phenomenon is not confined only to targeting civilians for acts of violence, but it also includes indiscriminate acts of violence without taking into account the necessary measures to avoid striking civilian targets. That constitutes cynical disregard for the lives of civilians and, as such, it is no different from targeting them deliberately.

The State of Qatar is part of a region in which civilians continue to suffer from the repercussions of armed violence. Dozens of innocent civilians are killed in Iraq every day. The war in Lebanon last July resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 people in only one month, most of them civilians. There have also been numerous victims in occupied Palestinian territory as a result of ongoing violence. They too are predominantly civilians. The total number of civilians killed since the outbreak of the recent crisis in the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict exceeds 4,000 since 2000.

Endangering the lives of civilians is not only a violation of international norms, laws and conventions — including the Charter of the United Nations — it is also a violation of numerous resolutions and presidential statements issued by the Security Council on the protection of civilians.

Prevention is always better than cure. It is important that we treat symptoms; however, it is more important that we address the root causes of this problem. Therein lies the importance of adopting policies that promote sound sustainable development, building a harmonious society, bringing about national reconciliation and encouraging preventive diplomacy. To do otherwise would constitute reaction at best. We need comprehensive plans to ensure more protection of civilians, plans that include existing mechanisms. Those, in turn, must be translated into reality and implemented, while activating the role of humanitarian organizations and emphasizing the need that they remain unbiased, neutral and independent.

The United Nations role in the protection of civilians is indispensable. We note that the protection of civilians is a priority of United Nations peacekeeping operations and that, in that context, it is especially important to have child protection advisers during conflict, particularly when children are endangered. In that regard, we call on the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to include child protection advisers in the structure of peacekeeping operations, and particularly the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon following its recent expansion.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Carmon (Israel): At the outset, I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Council and to thank you for convening this open debate. We trust that, with your able stewardship, you will aptly guide the work of the Council in dealing with the various challenges that the international community faces around the world.

I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing and for his dedication to addressing humanitarian concerns across the globe over the past years. We wish him much success in the future.

Israel assigns vital importance to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and is encouraged by the continued efforts of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and his staff in that area. We believe that all individuals should live without fear of physical, sexual, psychological and other forms of abuse stemming from conflict.

As Mr. Egeland said this morning, the international community must demonstrate that it has a "depoliticized [and] truly shared interest" in ensuring the protection of civilians. Efforts will be "judged by the extent to which our actions have made a difference". To that extent, Israel appreciates the emphasis in recent reports on protecting women and children, and believes that continued grass-roots efforts, alongside greater governmental engagement, can help end that deeply troubling phenomenon.

In recent months, we have been reminded of the vulnerability of and danger posed to civilians in our region by forces of extremism and instability, as evidenced by the conflict with Hizbollah in Lebanon and the ongoing Palestinian terror war against Israel. We have been reminded again that no side has a monopoly on victimhood or human suffering, and that the jagged shards of armed conflict can cut deep and wide, affecting all civilians – Israeli, Lebanese and Palestinian.

Over the summer, Hizbollah terrorists operating in southern Lebanon fired some 4,000 Katyusha rockets into northern Israel, explicitly targeting civilians in their homes and places of work. Hizbollah's onslaught of raining rockets forced nearly 1 million Israeli civilians to flee their homes, causing insufferable damage to civilian life and infrastructure.

Similarly, the relentless Qassam rockets fired by Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip at Israeli communities in the South within the past year — more than 1,000 rockets to date — were all direct and targeted attempts on the lives of civilians, attacks against schools and synagogues, kindergartens and classrooms, shopping malls and playgrounds.

The blatant disregard of terrorists for the value of human life is a brutal maliciousness that we have seen even among their own populations. Hizbollah stored its rockets inside homes and launched attacks from positions nestled within the fabric of civilian life. In using civilians as human shields, Hizbollah sought to evade responsibility and accountability for its crimes.

Palestinian terrorists, too, have employed civilians as shields. Recently, Palestinian civilians in Gaza were specifically called to surround the home of a known terrorist. Human Rights Watch recorded the incident, declaring that

> "[c]alling civilians to a location that the opposing side has identified for attack is at worst human shielding, at best failing to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians from the effects of attack. Both are violations of international humanitarian law".

The deliberate blurring of the distinction between terrorist and civilian is a terrorist tactic. It is a gross injustice that endangers civilians and betrays the principles of human dignity and life.

It is the obligation of all nations first and foremost to protect their people from all harm, but it is also the obligation of all nations to ensure that they and their citizens not endanger others. It is an obligation which Israel embraces. No doubt, strategic and ethical complexities regarding counter-terrorism exist; we addressed Israel's perspective on the issue when we last spoke before the Council on this subject. But in the quest to secure our world and protect all peoples, we must strike the proper balance. Failure to hold terrorist groups accountable gravely endangers the vitality of the human project and will only encourage them to increase their abuse, manipulation and exploitation of civilians.

The ceasefire in our region, initiated and agreed upon by Prime Minister Olmert and Chairman Abbas one week ago, is a sign of promise for all citizens of the region — all civilians, no matter their nationality.

But we must see to it as well that the underlying tensions of the conflict and Hamas's disregard for its internationally accepted obligations — recognition of Israel, renouncing violence and terror, and abiding by previous agreements — are addressed.

The past few months have been difficult, with difficulties levied particularly on civilians, but the past cannot be changed and the victims of the conflict cannot be returned. What remains is the course we chart together for the future. Prime Minister Olmert reasserted that position in his remarks just last week:

> "All we can do today is prevent further tragedies and bequeath to the younger generation a bright horizon and hope for life."

Let us hope that all sides will keep to their commitments identified within the ceasefire and that an authentic Palestinian partner will emerge from it, dedicated to the vision and cause of peace.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Iceland and Ukraine align themselves with this declaration.

I wish to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to discuss this important issue in the Security Council. I also want to thank Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his informative briefing. The European Union would like to extend its appreciation to Mr. Egeland for his excellent work as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a complex challenge. Civilians, including women and children, continue to bear the brunt of armed conflicts. The European Union welcomes the sustained attention paid by the Security Council to that important issue.

At the 2005 World Summit, the heads of State and Government recognized that the protection of civilians in armed conflict is a key concern of the international community. The European Union reiterates its support for the historic Summit Outcome conclusion that each individual State has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – a conclusion which was reaffirmed by resolution 1674 (2006).

The best way to protect civilians in armed conflicts is to prevent conflicts. The EU is pleased to note the strengthening of the culture of prevention across the United Nations and vigorously supports the continuation of this trend. The Security Council plays an important role in this regard. Timely and adequate briefings by the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and other relevant actors will help the Council to act sufficiently early on in conflict situations to effectively protect civilians at risk.

Humanitarian access is a crucial part of protecting civilians in armed conflict. The European Union is troubled by the denial of full and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians in need of help, especially when this is used as a political tool and as a weapon of war. Also, attacks on humanitarian personnel cannot be tolerated. The European Union fully supports the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. We urge all parties to conflicts to provide unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance and to take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and of the United Nations and its associated personnel.

The EU is alarmed by the fact that 63 journalists and media staff were killed in armed conflicts in 2005 and 75 in 2006. The Security Council should take note of such a dramatic development. Journalists are civilians and as such are entitled to full protection.

The European Union believes it is vital to investigate crimes under international law committed against civilians and bring their perpetrators to justice. The restoration of law and order to prevent future violence and abuses and the tackling of impunity should be a priority. It is for States concerned to bring justice to perpetrators of the most serious crimes and for the international community to support their efforts. Where States fail to bring perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice, the international community should be able to act.

The European Union urges States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute and to the treaties of international humanitarian, human

rights and refugee laws, and to take all appropriate measures to ensure proper investigation and prosecution of any violations of the relevant rules.

The EU highlights the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and holds that the protection of civilians in armed conflict can be properly achieved only by strengthening the role of women as constructive actors in developing and implementing appropriate responses. Protection from physical and sexual violence remains one of the major challenges of civilian protection. Peacekeeping operations should be mandated to employ all feasible measures to prevent sexual violence and to address their effects where they take place.

United Nations peacekeeping operations and associated personnel have a particular responsibility in their own conduct in this regard. The European Union reiterates its full support for the policy of zero tolerance of sexual abuse and exploitation by such personnel, introduced by the United Nations, and has adopted the same policy in its own European security and defence policy operations.

The human rights of millions of children continue to be violated and millions of children suffer in situations of armed conflict. Every day children are killed, maimed, abducted or recruited, in violation of applicable law, as child soldiers, fall victims of rape or other grave sexual violence, and suffer from attacks against schools and hospitals that prevent them from enjoying their rights to education and health care. The European Union is fully committed to protecting children from the grave violations that occur in armed conflicts. It is mainstreaming the issues of children and armed conflict into its advocacy, policies and programmes and has continued to implement its plan of action for the guidelines on children and armed conflict. In this context, the EU commends the sustained activity of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts, as well as the dedicated work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, UNICEF and the child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations.

The special protection needs of refugees and displaced persons must be adequately addressed. The European Union welcomes the call by the Security Council for all parties to a conflict to provide for these needs in peace processes and to create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of displaced persons. Also, peacekeeping missions must have mandates and resources to guarantee this, for example, by providing security for and around displaced persons camps.

The easy availability and destabilizing accumulations of small arms and light weapons continue to pose a grave danger for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Another issue that the European Union would like to highlight is that of explosive remnants of war. Progress has been made since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in 2001, but small arms and light weapons continue to be the real weapons of mass destruction today. They kill thousands every day, are instrumental in depriving millions of their human rights, undermine development and fuel conflict, crime and terrorism. The EU believes that transfer controls, marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, control of arms brokering and ammunition and the integration of such measures into development assistance need to be tackled in order to better protect civilians.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict is a multifaceted challenge. The European Union is fully committed and works actively to protect civilians in armed conflict. In cooperation with the United Nations, the EU continues its relentless work for the promotion of peace and conflict prevention so that in the future no one, child or adult, is forced to suffer in armed conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mrs. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your work as President of the Security Council during the month of December. We thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for his illustrative presentation. We would also like to express our thanks to him for his support in this important area.

The Government of Colombia reaffirms its commitment to international humanitarian law, particularly to the norms related to the protection of civilians. We underline the importance for international assistance in this field to adhere to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

Following these principles — while appropriately channelling the collective efforts in support of national authorities — acquires a greater significance when cooperation is directed at countries that enjoy democratic institutions and legitimately constituted Governments.

On this occasion my delegation also wishes to reiterate the importance of United Nations agencies being fully familiar with the work being carried out by national Governments in the area of protection of civilians when establishing the priorities of their work and informing the Organization on the respective situations. Objective, balanced and impartial information includes the identification of shortcomings and challenges, but also includes the recognition of the progress in each country.

In the case of Colombia, it is necessary that the reality of our situation and the efforts made by the national Government to face the complex problems that affect the civilian population be properly reflected in the reports on humanitarian affairs being distributed in the United Nations. They help to define appropriate and effective support from the international community.

Colombia has had to face the actions of violent groups that have attacked the civilian population. Those groups, financed by transnational drug trafficking, have caused internal displacements, kidnappings, the recruiting of children and other forms of violence against civilians. The National Government has been acting decisively to face the violent actions of those groups, restore security and thus create the conditions for the proper protection of Colombians. Our population has responded to violence from those criminal organizations with solid civic support for the Government's democratic security policy and for strengthening that policy during the second term of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez, which began recently.

As a result of that policy, the security situation in the country has improved noticeably. Today in Colombia, the national police and civilian authorities have established a permanent presence in all of the country's municipalities, a situation that four years ago was not guaranteed in 157 communities. Today, the State has strengthened its capacity to intervene using the armed forces to deal with criminal groups. Coca crops have been reduced by nearly 50 per cent since 2000. The demobilization of violent groups is being carried out and nearly 43,000 former members of guerrilla and self-defence groups have surrendered their weapons.

As a result of those realities, in the last four years all crime indicators have been substantially reduced, including homicides, kidnappings and various attacks against the civilian population. The number of new annual displacement cases has also been reduced. In 2002, that number included 425,000 people. In 2005, it was reduced to 169,000, and to 90,000 in the first ten months of 2006.

A fundamental part of Government action involves care for vulnerable groups. The State is implementing humanitarian policies to care for civilians who have become victims of violence. The Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation coordinates the comprehensive care programme for displaced persons. That programme is carried out using an approach based on the restitution of the rights of displaced households and their social and economic reintegration into their places of origin, or into the places of voluntary relocation.

To that effect, national and international cooperation resources are allocated. Likewise, the programme includes emergency care for displaced persons. Furthermore, the promotion of the return of families — keeping in mind the humanitarian principles of voluntary return and security — has fostered the return of 120,000 people in recent years. On the other hand, stabilized socio-economic conditions are being promoted through actions including loans for productive projects and technical training, complementary support for the acquisition of homes and subsidized health services for those families and guaranteed education for their children.

Several recommendations that have been repeatedly presented in United Nations reports on the issue of displacement have been implemented in my country in recent years. The problems are complex, but the Government has spared no effort to face them decisively. Colombia hopes that this progress is recognized. The challenge in front of us is still great, but only through a realistic vision of our situation, free from prejudice, will it be possible to concentrate our efforts in an effective manner for the benefit of affected groups.

The protection of civilians also includes specific measures and actions for indigenous communities. The

Defence Ministry has implemented a policy for the protection of ethnic minorities, which has been agreed by indigenous organizations, through instructions to State forces that seek to promote the protection of communities and guarantee the respect for their collective and individual rights in carrying out their operations. Likewise, the Government has prepared, with the participation of indigenous organizations, a comprehensive plan of support for vulnerable communities, aimed at raising long-term social welfare and guaranteeing security conditions for the communities affected by poverty, violence or drug trafficking. The situation of the specific groups that have been the object of displacement or threats by violent groups deserves special priority and action by the State, in the framework of policies to care for the displaced.

The Government of Colombia fully shares the objective of guaranteeing the protection of the civilian population and of the enjoyment of their rights. Any action in that area, including international support, should be realized on the basis of cooperation and appropriate coordination with national authorities, under an impartial approach and in strict observance of the principles that guide the activities of the United Nations in the area of humanitarian assistance.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Protection of civilians is a primary objective of the United Nations, including the Security Council. The Council has stressed — most recently in resolution 1674 (2006) — that the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons may even constitute a threat to international peace and security.

There are many factors leading to the increased vulnerability of civilians during armed conflicts. A major threat to civilians, both during and after armed conflicts, is the use of cluster munitions. A number of countries in different parts of the world are affected by the use of cluster munitions. The humanitarian consequences are enormous and the setback to development is massive. We must prevent cluster munitions from becoming a new humanitarian disaster the way landmines did before we managed to put the Landmine Convention in place. We must act now to establish an international ban on cluster munitions. Norway supports the call made by Secretary-General Annan and also reiterated here today by United Nations Under-Secretary-General Egeland — to turn the use of such cluster munitions into history.

Forced displacement is another major obstacle to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) often find themselves trapped by the fact that the Governments primarily responsible for their protection are the very same ones that have created conditions leading to the displacement. Despite their vulnerability and urgent needs for protection, IDPs often fall between the mandates of various humanitarian bodies.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were developed to meet the specific challenges of IDPs. We want to underline the normative as well as the operational importance of the Guidelines, and we are encouraged by the increasing use of the Guidelines as a standard, by States, United Nations agencies and regional and non-governmental organizations.

Situations of armed conflict pose particular risks for women and girls. Violence against women, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, often becomes a weapon of war. Unfortunately, there is often reluctance to deal with gender-based and sexual violence. We must ensure an end to impunity for those grave criminal acts and provide adequate protection for women and girls.

Regarding humanitarian assistance, recent evaluations indicate that the humanitarian community still fails to integrate a gender perspective in a systematic manner in their programming and implementation practices. The result is that the rights of women and girls are not sufficiently protected. Norway supports the initiative by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to develop a five-point action plan to rectify this dysfunctionality on the part of the humanitarian community.

A very specific concern as regards gender discrimination is sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations and associated personnel involved in international operations. Norway strongly regrets the fact that this abhorrent practice continues to require our attention. We remain strongly committed to working actively to prevent such behaviour by all categories of personnel. In that connection, Norwegian military authorities enforce a zero-tolerance policy regarding the purchase of sexual services, which applies to all military personnel serving abroad. The ultimate aim of our efforts should be to instil zero-tolerance on an international level based on the

standards in the Secretary General's bulletin on sexual exploitation and abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

Armed conflicts are generally characterized by grave and systematic human rights abuses, impunity and absence of accountability. Whether we are able to end impunity will strongly influence how we are able to prevent future conflicts. Transitional justice that ensures accountability, serves justice and achieves reconciliation is a prerequisite in this regard.

Norway wants to pay tribute to the courageous human rights defenders, be they journalists, lawyers, staff of human rights non-governmental organizations or others, who every day risk their lives and security for the lives and freedom of others. Their cause should be ours. We need their eyes, ears and hearts even more during armed conflicts and in volatile phases of transition.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his active engagement in the issue of protection of civilians in armed conflict, including today's briefing to the Council.

Mr. President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): I would like to thank Qatar for convening this open debate today. The Canadian Government wishes to pay tribute to Jan Egeland for the great commitment and very strong leadership he has brought to protecting civilians worldwide.

All people should live in reasonable expectation that they will not be subject to serious violations of human rights or international humanitarian law. People should not live in daily fear that they will be deliberately targeted. Yet millions of people around the world are targeted and remain displaced and dispossessed. In Darfur, Sri Lanka, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan and northern Uganda, men, women and children face daily threats including threats to the very right to life.

Today, I would like to focus on three themes. First, the Security Council must demonstrate courageous leadership and unwavering political will to ensure that populations at risk have access to the greatest protection possible. Secondly, continued emphasis must be placed on ending impunity. Perpetrators of attacks against civilians in violation of international law must be held accountable for their actions. Thirdly, we all share in the responsibility to advance a culture of protection. The Council, the United Nations Secretariat and agencies and Member States must make advocacy, monitoring and capacity-building watchwords for our efforts.

Since the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict was first brought onto the Security Council agenda, important and practical progress has been made. In the field, agencies are devoting greater attention to refining their abilities to meet protection needs. United Nations missions are authorized to use force to deter and respond to attacks on civilians and some are organizing themselves so that civilian protection acts as a unifying cross-mission theme. In addition, new sanctions regimes have been more attentive to the need to target their impact so as to mitigate unintended humanitarian consequences.

Canada very much welcomes the adoption of resolution 1674 (2006) earlier this year. Nevertheless, efforts to date suggest that international action, including by the Council, remains uneven. We need look no further than the grave humanitarian situation in Darfur to understand that our vigilance must not wane. Canada is deeply concerned by the continuing violence and the persistent culture of impunity in Darfur. We condemn persistent violence, in particular sexual and gender-based violence committed by all parties, including in internally displaced persons camps, where rape continues to be used as a weapon of war. Canada continues to call for an immediate end to the ongoing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Darfur and an end to the persistent culture of impunity there. We urge the Government of Sudan to prevent further violations, to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice in accordance with international law, and to facilitate humanitarian action.

Similarly, the recent shelling of an internally displaced persons camp near Vakarai in Sri Lanka highlights the heavy price paid by civilians in that long-standing conflict, particularly where perceptions of civilians have grown ambiguous, and thus their targeting, recruitment as child soldiers, or denial of assistance to them, is no longer viewed as taboo by some. We urge the parties to the conflict to exercise the utmost restraint and to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by promoting the protection of civilians and facilitating safe and unhindered access for humanitarian agencies to civilians in need.

The linkage between civilian protection and the maintenance of international peace and security is well established. The Council has a direct role to play in encouraging and promoting the protection of civilians. Council members have repeatedly pledged that they and the wider international community will take steps in this regard. We applaud this leadership and we will continue to support and monitor the implementation of the Council's commitments.

Looking ahead, the Council must be more proactive in responding to situations where civilians are at risk. Greater focus should be given to timely, credible preventative measures, in addition to restorative actions. That means drawing on the many levers at the Council's disposal, including good offices, envoys and monitoring missions. The Council should show leadership by demonstrating a greater willingness to draw on the United Nations human rights mechanisms for early warning, while promoting preventative deployments, targeted sanctions, diplomatic initiatives and adherence to international legal instruments in support of affected populations.

In that, strong and consistent Security Council resolutions are critical. Where peace support operations are given protection mandates, these mandates must be unambiguous and backed up by adequate financial and human resources.

Effective action also requires consistent follow-up. The Council must be proactive in monitoring the implementation of its protection-related commitments. That means drawing on lessons learned from missions with protection mandates, as well as being prepared to rethink and readjust policy approaches. The Council should outline specific actions to be taken by parties to a conflict, monitor their implementation and apply penalties if actions are not taken. The message must be unequivocal — perpetrators of abuse will be held accountable for their actions.

On Darfur, the Council and the wider international community has been divided and inconsistent. There must be consequences for countries that violate the arms embargo and for all parties that continue to violate the peace agreements and human rights in Darfur.

We urge all parties to adhere to the principles agreed to in Addis Ababa, including the need to re-energize the political process, to establish a strengthened ceasefire, and to find a way forward for peacekeeping in Darfur. The Darfur crisis can only be resolved through a political process, not through violence.

Field visits by the Council are also key. Council missions provide an indispensable opportunity to urge parties to a conflict to allow safe and unimpeded access by aid workers to those in need, to reinforce that there will be no impunity for genocide and war crimes, and to ensure that United Nations missions are being vigilant in protecting civilians and meeting the needs of displaced populations.

There can be no impunity. States must prosecute those who commit genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or other serious human rights violations. No amnesty should be granted for international crimes.

The Council and the broader United Nations membership have a particular responsibility to ensure that those who commit serious violations of international law are brought to justice. Canada is also concerned by deadly attacks on United Nations and associated personnel. A recent study has highlighted that attacks against aid workers are increasingly politically motivated and that national staff are more at risk than ever before. Canada urges Member States to sign or ratify the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and its Optional Protocol. Member States must show the willingness to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of acts against United Nations and associated personnel.

Let me also underscore the importance of protecting and promoting the right to freedom of opinion and expression. In that respect, the security of journalists — particularly in armed conflict — requires our ongoing attention. The United Nations must also address hate media in its own mission planning and operations. If left unchecked, hate media can further fan the flames of conflict and put populations at greater risk. Early efforts by the United Nations to counter hate media and to ensure that those who propagate hatred are brought to justice are important preventive steps.

(*spoke in French*)

While the leadership of the Security Council is essential to strengthen the protection of civilians, it is a responsibility that must be shared by all of us: the Council, the Secretariat, United Nations agencies and

Member States. Canada encourages the Secretariat and United Nations agencies to leave no room for ambiguity in their assessments, because previous resolutions have authorized them to indicate to Member States situations that require their attention to protect civilians. It is essential to provide the Council and other competent bodies with concrete advice and recommendations.

The effectiveness of United Nations action depends on the capacity of United Nations country teams on the ground. Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators and individual staff must be in a position to indicate protection concerns to parties to conflict. Progress in this area has been only modest; we must further strengthen this capacity. In addition, those deployed with a Security Council mandate to protect civilians must better understand what is expected of them and take a joint approach. For example, it is essential that all actors cooperate to ensure that the predeployment training of military and civilian police includes a specific focus on civilian protection when such a mandate is entrusted to them.

The 10-point plan proposed by Mr. Egeland requires our sustained support. Each point represents a concrete and essential component. Canada wholeheartedly endorses this programme.

A strong framework now exists for the protection of civilians. Resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1674 (2006), together with resolutions on conflict prevention, women and peace and security, children and armed conflict, the safety of humanitarian workers, impunity and the exploitation of natural resources are a clear set of mutually reinforcing Council commitments. To the extent that they create a framework for Council action, those resolutions also establish criteria that all Member States can apply to hold the Council accountable when it is slow to act.

The most direct measures of success are the number of lives saved, the number of displacements avoided and the mitigation and settlement of conflicts. In the last analysis, the Council, the United Nations as a whole and the Member States that constitute it will be judged in terms of their willingness to make a real difference in the lives of the people who need our help most. Our actions must be concrete, and we must make flexible and pragmatic use of the tools at our disposal. The Council can continue to rely on Canada's support in overcoming these difficulties.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We hail your wisdom and stewardship. At the same time, I would like to express the deepest appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Peru. Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, not only for his briefing today, but also for the work that he accomplished during his tenure in general and during the humanitarian crisis that my country, Lebanon, witnessed last summer. I salute him and wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Between 12 July and 14 August 2006, Lebanon was the target of a ferocious Israeli aggression, considered disproportionate by international legal standards as well as by the international community. The scope and the scale of the destruction were massive: 1,191 civilians were killed and more than 4,000 were injured. Approximately 900,000 people — one quarter of the Lebanese population — were displaced; many of them are still homeless. Buildings and homes were flattened to the ground.

In 34 days, the Israeli forces carried out a massive military campaign. The Israeli air force flew more than 12,000 combat missions, the navy fired 2,500 shells and the army fired more than 100,000 shells. The Israeli army pursued an indiscriminate and deliberate policy of targeting civilians, whether they were hiding in shelters, fleeing in convoys from the area of attack or lying wounded in ambulances and medical facilities. No measures were taken to ensure that the targets of the attacks had no military character. No time was given to the victims to flee, and when time was given, the fleeing civilians were themselves the targets of violent and inhuman attacks.

As if all these massacres were not enough; as if the state of panic and fear experienced by the entire Lebanese population, from north to south and from east to west, were insufficient; and as if the attacks against the Lebanese infrastructure, which caused billions of dollars in losses, were inadequate, the Israeli forces prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching large parts of south Lebanon. In a number of instances in which they did allow such assistance, the forces

attacked the aid convoys either directly or indirectly. The Israeli forces even attacked United Nations positions and bases. At the Khiam base of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, for example, four United Nations observers lost their lives as a result of a deliberately planned attack.

We all remember how a naval blockade and a land blockade were imposed on Lebanon and how the Israeli air force managed to impose a curfew on the country, with countless raids that endangered the humanitarian situation of all Lebanese. To this day, we are still dealing with the lethal effects of the cluster munitions, 90 per cent of which were fired by Israel in the last 72 hours of the aggression. There were 1,159,200 individual bombs dispersed over south Lebanon, concentrated in developed areas and agricultural lands, all of which have since become desolate.

Impunity cannot be tolerated. The twisting of reality and blatant violations of international humanitarian law cannot be accepted. The failure of the Security Council to take responsible action to ensure access to Lebanese civilians and to protect humanitarian convoys over a three-week period should not be repeated. The Security Council has the responsibility to act swiftly to protect civilians.

In its presidential statement of 20 December 2002, the Security Council recognized that secure humanitarian access and the clear separation of civilians and combatants should be ensured in armed conflicts. In resolution 1674 (2006), adopted on 28 April, the Security Council recalled that deliberately targeting civilians and other protected persons in situations of armed conflict is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, and the Council asked all parties immediately to put an end to such practices.

The high-level Commission of Inquiry, created pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-2/1, of 11 August 2006, established Israel's responsibility for the gross violations of international humanitarian law committed during its military attacks on Lebanon. It has proved beyond doubt that Israel's claims that it took precautions to protect civilian lives in the conflict were untrue.

In order to prevent similar events in the future, whether in the region or in other parts of the world, the forthcoming report concerning the protection of civilians in armed conflict should include a clear and extensive depiction of the suffering endured by the Lebanese civilian population caused by the Israeli attacks this past summer. Although Lebanon expresses the utmost appreciation for all the humanitarian aid and support that it has received from all nations of the world and from the United Nations, it endured extremely harsh circumstances when the ceasefire was constantly delayed, which allowed Israel to continue its violent attacks.

Lebanon calls on the Security Council to deploy more efforts in the future to seek a durable and sustainable peaceful solution to armed conflict in the world.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe (Myanmar): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Council for this month. I would also like to thank you for having convened this open debate.

I wish to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for having updated the Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. I also wish to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to him for his leadership and dedication in discharging his important task. His contributions, and the noble mission that he has ably carried out, will be remembered by the international community.

Armed conflicts breed a cycle of violence and bring untold suffering to innocent civilians. In the years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1296 (2000), the international community has faced numerous challenges in providing security for and ensuring the well-being of civilian populations. As Under-Secretary-General Egeland has pointed out, success depends on united action taken by all members.

Armed conflicts, and the great harm they do to civilians, are exacerbated by the easy availability of illicit small arms and light weapons. In addition, terrorism also causes great suffering to the civilian population. The international community must effectively address these serious challenges. Myanmar joins other members of the international community in condemning all such acts. We fully sympathize with the victims of armed conflict in various parts of the

world, as we ourselves endured the bitter experience of insurgent groups committing atrocities against the civilian population. We fully agree that the protection of civilians must be depoliticized and must transcend singular interests so as to become a core principle of humanity for all civilizations.

The most efficient way to protect civilians in armed conflict is to resolve the root causes and bring armed conflicts to an end. Soon after regaining independence in 1948, Myanmar had to face an insurgency that lasted for over 40 years. Because of the national reconciliation efforts of the Government, 17 of 18 insurgent groups have returned to the legal fold and are now working together with the Government for the development of their respective regions. The insurgency that had plagued the country has come to a virtual end. There now remain a faction of one insurgent group, the Karen National Union (KNU), and remnants of armed narcotraffickers, who are now confined to small enclaves in the border areas. Although their ranks have greatly diminished and they currently control little or no territory, they continue to target civilians and commit acts of terrorism.

In order to protect the civilian population, the Government is conducting counter-insurgency operations against those elements of the KNU and the remnants of narcotrafficking armed groups that are conducting terrorist activities against the civilians.

With regard to allegations that civilians suffer from the repercussions of counter-insurgency operations, we took the members of the diplomatic corps and the United Nations country team to those areas. We also invited Under-Secretary-General Gambari to those areas, so that he could personally witness the actual situation.

Let me conclude by expressing our strong conviction that only through a comprehensive approach to promote economic growth, poverty eradication, sustainable development and national reconciliation will we be able to put an end to armed conflicts — which, in our view, is the best way to protect civilians. To that end, our Government has, to date, spent over 81 billion kyats and some $550 million to develop the border areas, where most of our ethnic nationalities reside. The Myanmar Government will do its national duty to protect its citizens and bring peace, stability and prosperity to the country.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Under-Secretary-General Egeland to respond to the observations made and questions posed.

Mr. Egeland: This has been another day of sitting and listening to many good interventions and proposals and, first and foremost, the expressions of support of Security Council members for what we are trying to do to protect civilians.

Certainly the good news is that that there are fewer conflicts and we are probably doing better humanitarian work, better peacekeeping work and better good offices mediation work in the United Nations than ever before. We are making progress overall. The bad news is that the armed men in the remaining armed conflicts, wars and internal strife are more ruthless than ever. They are better armed than ever, and their whole purpose seems to be to make the situation as bad as possible for the defenceless civilian population. So in 2007 we will really be back to the darkest ages in terms of not protecting civilian populations. And it is really a question of crimes against humanity and war crimes — in certain cases amounting to genocide. I will on my many missions never forget the abused women of eastern Congo, the kidnapped children of northern Uganda, the camp population in Darfur or the relatives of the killed civilians in Iraq and the Palestinian areas and elsewhere.

There is, of course, one major remedy to this situation, and that is united action, as so many have stated today — united action by all internal actors, their Governments, civil society and all military and armed groups, as well as united international action.

When I started my work, the worst cases of abuses of civilian populations were found in pockets of southern Sudan, in eastern Congo, in northern Uganda and in Liberia. In all of those cases, we have made progress. But the situation has become worse in other areas. In those other areas, including Darfur, Gaza and Iraq, there has not been any united action, at either the national or the international level, to put an end to the suffering of the civilian population. Only through re-achieving unity of purpose and unity of action will we be able to make progress on these issues.

I have been heartened to see growing support for the agenda of the protection of civilians. There are virtually hundreds, if not thousands, of civil society groups and non-governmental organizations following

this, in the east, in the west, in the north and in the south. I have been heartened to see that an overwhelming majority of Member States now believe that this is the core of what the United Nations is all about.

As this is my swan song, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, and the members of the Council for your kind words. I should like to thank the secretariat of the Security Council for always helping us. I should like thank my staff, which has been writing all of these long drafts for me to be presented here. I should like also to thank the non-governmental organizations, the United Nations agencies and all of the partners that have developed the agenda for the protection of civilians and have made humanitarian work more effective in these last, long and tough but very rewarding years.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Egeland for his clarifications.

We would like once again to express our appreciation to Mr. Egeland and to wish him every success.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.